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ABSTRACT

Some key findings from data analysis of student records and college surveys regarding non-prescribed higher education (NPHE) courses at further education (FE) colleges in England, many of which are not formally recognized as higher education, are as follows: (1) over half of enrolled students are over age 30 and enrolled part time; (2) there is no consistency among colleges in the use of the terms certificate, diploma, or award; (3) colleges wish to have stronger partnerships with the private sector but are constrained by limited funds; and (4) NPHE is invisible within most college hierarchies. Colleges and the LSC can raise the profile of NPHE by standardizing qualification levels and equivalences, eliminating funding disparities, and designating it as higher education in its own right. (Appendices include the survey instrument; a framework for higher education qualification; and the National Qualifications Framework; three tables; 17 references). (AJ)

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Non-prescribed higher education

Where does it fit?

Janet Clark

research report

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Edited by Maggie Greenwood
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PREFACE

The research was carried out a time of discussion and debate about the higher education (HE) participation targets set by the government that 50% of young people aged 18–30 should have participated in higher education by the year 2010. There are more than 60,000 students participating in a range of courses above Level 3 delivered in further education (FE) colleges; many of these are yet to be formally recognised as higher education. They have become known as non-prescribed higher education (NPHE) courses.

This publication reports research carried out for the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) in 2002 into NPHE programmes delivered in FE colleges. NPHE is the term classifying mainly (but not exclusively) higher level vocational qualifications at Levels 4 and 5 currently funded by the LSC. Other prescribed HE qualifications are funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). The project brief was to quantify NPHE in FE colleges in England; analyse participation trends; evaluate the contribution of NPHE locally and nationally; report on issues in relation to the National Qualifications Framework (NQF); and consider future funding.

The report identifies a number of issues relating to the future position of NPHE with respect to identification, mapping and funding.

Dr Maggie Greenwood
Research Manager
LSDA

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SUMMARY

1 THE PROJECT

The Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) was commissioned by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) in December 2001 to carry out a survey of the size, scope, location and importance of 'non-prescribed higher education' (NPHE); to assess how it would be affected by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) work on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF); and to make recommendations to the LSC about the future provision and funding of this work. The research was carried out between January and July 2002 and the findings were based on: data analysis, telephone interviews with selected FE colleges, the study of relevant circulars, and contact with QCA and other relevant bodies.

2 BACKGROUND, DEFINITIONS AND FUNDING POLICY

Educational legislation from the 1944 Education Act onwards has sought to define higher education by reference to certain categories of courses, listed as schedules to the Acts. However, not all courses defined as higher education have been funded by the same funding body and regulations issued by the Department for Education and Science and its successor departments have made distinctions between categories of courses for funding purposes. The Education (Prescribed Courses of Higher Education) (England) Regulations 1989, clarifying the intentions of the Education Reform Act (ERA) 1988, identified certain courses as 'prescribed' higher education to be funded by the newly established Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council (PCFC); the rest became 'non-prescribed higher education'. In the decade following the ERA and, in particular, after the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, more courses were transferred from the non-prescribed to the prescribed category in order to be funded by the HE funding body, regardless of where they were delivered institutionally. However, a variety of higher level qualifications, chiefly technical and professional in nature and mainly studied part-time, still remain funded by the 'FE' funding body – the LSC – and delivered by FE colleges.

3 HIGHER EDUCATION IN FE COLLEGES: NATIONAL POLICY

During the 1990s a great deal of work took place at national level to try to establish a framework for qualifications which would provide a transparent and flexible range of pathways for people of all ages and previous educational histories to progress from one stage to another over time. This was considered desirable in its own right, but also necessary if further education and higher education were to offer entry and achievement to students from a wider range of social and economic backgrounds than previously. Not only was this important for each sector separately, but together the FE and HE sectors could provide powerful partnerships for progression, particularly if there was an expansion of vocational sub-degree work in further education, which would lead directly to degree courses in higher education. This was thought to be especially significant as a contribution to the achievement of the government's target of 50% participation in higher education by those under 29 by 2010. At the same time, consideration was being given to assigning HE courses to levels, not only in relation to QCA's work – the National Qualifications Framework – but also to a framework for HE qualifications developed independently by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). NPHE qualifications are currently being submitted by their awarding bodies to QCA for accreditation within its framework with the intention of completion in time for the 2003/04 academic year. Progress so far has been very slow.

4 NPHE: THE DATA

The source of the data for this research is the LSC's aggregated Individualised Student Record (ISR) for 1998/99, 1999/2000 and 2000/01. The data has been screened, discrepancies eliminated and account taken of funding policy to ensure year-on-year comparability. Some key findings are listed below.

- For each of the 3 years of the research there were over 60,000 students studying for LSC-funded NPHE qualifications in the FE sector, most of them studying for a single qualification.
- Over the 3 years surveyed there was a decline in enrolments of 19% and in students by 17%, with the decline more marked in the 19+ age group.
- In 2000/01 enrolments were distributed across 330 colleges and external organisations.
- In terms of age 59% of the students studying at NPHE level in 2000/01 were over 30, with just 4% in the 16–18 bracket.
- 60% (nearly 38,000) of the students in 2000/01 were studying for qualifications in the business area, with the largest concentrations in finance/accounting and management, each of which sub-programme area is greater (around 14,000 each) than any other single programme area.
- In all, the 2000/01 statistics showed enrolments to 600 separately identified qualifications.
- There is no consistency among awarding bodies in the application of the terms certificate, diploma or award.
- The take-up of NVQs represents 30% of the total.
- Most of the qualifications are studied part-time.
- Almost every college offers some NPHE as part of its total portfolio: nine colleges each had more than 800 enrolments in 2000/01and a further 16 more than 500.

5 THE COLLEGES SURVEY

Eight colleges, offering a substantial amount of NPHE and representing a geographical spread, were invited to participate in a structured telephone survey and all agreed. The survey was based on their 2000/01 data and the questions focused on the place of NPHE in their portfolio of courses, its contribution to their vocational and HE strategies, and present and future trends. Colleges were sent the questions in advance.

Key findings from the telephone surveys are listed below.

- All the colleges surveyed reflected the national picture by having a very high number of enrolments in the business programme area.
- Most of the enrolments were part-time.
- Colleges wished to be responsive to employer needs but were constrained by their funding and found running small groups and doing some NVQ assessments expensive. A more generous funding formula would help with peaks and troughs and maintain relationships with employers.
- Most of the colleges regarded NPHE as part of their vocational strategy, with courses taught by staff teaching at other levels in the vocational specialisms.

- In terms of catchment most of the NPHE in the surveyed colleges was local or sub-regional.

- Those colleges that were familiar with HEFCE funding found it generally more generous than LSC funding but inflexible in relation to the needs of individual students who might wish to attend part of a course only.

- One of the problems for colleges was that as an identifiable area of work NPHE was somewhat 'invisible'. It was part of the vocational portfolio but it did not usually feature in FE inspections. It was higher education but not considered as such by the outside world. It did not count towards national targets for participation in higher education. Although LSC was known to have the power to fund NPHE, colleges believed that NPHE would always seem peripheral if funded by LSC, because it (LSC) was seen as primarily responsible for work to Level 3.

6 ISSUES

In conducting the research a number of issues arose in relation to the integrity of the data, anomalies and inconsistencies of classification, lack of equivalence between HEFCE and LSC's data collection systems, size of course and inconsistencies in current funding policy and practice. These were beyond the scope of the research but suggest the following actions.

- Further work is needed by LSC and HEFCE to eliminate 'rogue' qualifications from the ISR.

- Further work is needed by QCA, QAA, LSC and HEFCE to develop a logical system for classifying higher level qualifications.

- Once a conceptual framework has been agreed for mapping NPHE qualifications against HEFCE/Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) categories, the data collection systems of HEFCE and LSC should be harmonised.

- The criteria for the distinction between 'prescribed' and non-prescribed' higher education should clarified and if time taken and/or size of course are the significant criteria, the distinction should be abandoned.

- Further work could be undertaken to establish which NPHE qualifications are already being funded by HEFCE in the university sector.

7 CONCLUSIONS

The research has looked in detail at which NPHE qualifications LSC is funding in the FE sector and the profile of their take-up. Overwhelmingly the qualifications are in the business area and undertaken by older students. However, this should not obscure the fact that there is take-up in small niches, which meet very precise local or sub-regional needs. Colleges view this provision as chiefly vocational in nature, arising from long-standing relationships with particular employers. Because of their breadth of mission colleges also have collaborative relationships with local higher education institutions (HEIs), which at present are largely seen as separate from their involvement in NPHE. National policy now views the vocational orientation of further education as significant for widening participation in higher education and for contributing to upskilling the workforce, and NPHE could play an important part in both these policy initiatives. One of the problems which has obscured the role of NPHE to date is its classification and nomenclature. If QCA is able to locate it firmly in the national framework for qualifications at sub-degree level or higher there will be over 60,000 more students visible as participants in higher education, for which the FE sector will be given credit. However, if this were to be counted as growth in participation, it would be a falsehood, and so participation in NPHE would have to be tracked back and included in the baseline.

Transferring the funding of NPHE to HEFCE would rationalise NPHE by level but not by institution. It might give NPHE a higher profile and greater status for the learners but if the vocational nature of NPHE for people at work were to become secondary to its role as a progression route to degree-level higher education, this could be detrimental. If funded by HEFCE, NPHE would have to have a place in the HE portfolio of qualifications in its own right and HEFCE would need to recognise the importance of funding short-cycle qualifications flexibly. If the decision is to retain the status quo, with LSC funding residual higher education in FE colleges, it would be desirable to redesignate the work so that it is not defined negatively, and then to give it a much higher profile in the context of higher level vocational qualifications delivered in the FE sector. An advantage of NPHE remaining with LSC is LSC's familiarity with short-cycle courses, its responsiveness to local and sub-regional needs and its more flexible model of funding.

8 IMPLICATIONS FOR COLLEGES

Colleges need to review their course profiles now for 2003/04. The issues below need urgent resolution if they are to plan adequately for provision in the immediate and longer term future.

- The pace of work on establishing NPHE levels and equivalences should be quickened, so that NPHE can be firmly placed, with conceptual justification, within the national qualifications frameworks by 2003/04.

- HEFCE and LSC should work together to eliminate the anomalies and disparities of funding NPHE by 2003/04.

- NPHE should be reviewed in the context of both the workforce skills agenda and the vocational route to higher education, and its importance as a contribution to strategic planning by FE Centres of Vocational Excellence (COVEs) acknowledged.

- Regardless of which funding council has the responsibility for funding NPHE, it should be re-designated and recognised as higher education in its own right.

1 THE PROJECT

1.1 Project brief

The Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) was commissioned by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) in December 2001 to carry out a survey of 'non-prescribed higher education' (NPHE) and to make recommendations to LSC about the future provision and funding of this work. In particular, LSC wished to understand:

- what NPHE was being delivered and by whom
- how many students were involved and the trends in take-up over the last 3 years
- what value the institutions placed on offering this work and how it contributed to the ethos, reputation and recruitment activities of the provider
- how much NPHE would be included in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and what the consequences would be of remaining outside it
- how much collaboration there was with employers, professional bodies and higher education institutions (HEIs)
- how valuable NPHE was to LSC and whether or not they should continue to fund it.

1.2 Methodology

A consultant working to LSDA's Research Manager for Qualifications in two phases from January to July 2002 undertook:

- analysis of LSC data for LSC-funded NPHE courses from the Individualised Student Record (ISR) for 1998/99, 1999/00 and 2000/01, to look at participation trends
- structured telephone interviews with eight colleges offering a significant amount of NPHE (see Appendices 1 and 2).

In addition, a desk study was made of relevant circulars and contact made with the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) and other organisations. (See Appendix 3.)

2 BACKGROUND: DEFINITIONS AND FUNDING POLICY

2.1 The Education Reform Act (ERA) 1988

2.1.1 Prescribed higher education

Non-prescribed higher education (NPHE) is a little-understood term. Its history is significant because it illustrates some of the difficulties that arise from equating levels of work with institutions, funding with levels of work, and institutions with funding. The expression 'prescribed' was used to identify certain provision in relation to The Education Act 1944 and The Education Reform Act (ERA) 1988 and 'non-prescribed' simply covered that which was not 'prescribed'. The 1988 Act[1] defined higher education courses as those categorised (a) to (h) in Section 120 Schedule 6 of the Act. However, in the subsequent Education (Prescribed Courses of Higher Education) (England) Regulations 1989,[2] the Secretary of State for Education and Science 'prescribed' some categories of these courses only for the purpose of attracting grant from the newly formed Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council (PCFC). (Before the ERA, higher education in the polytechnic and FE sectors or advanced further education –

AFE as it was called – was funded by local education authorities (LEAs), although the National Advisory Body (NAB) for public sector higher education had responsibility for the approval of courses and determined the level of resource for the programmes.)

2.1.2 Non-prescribed higher education

'Non-prescribed' HE courses were therefore any courses falling within the definition of HE courses listed in ERA 1988 Schedule 6 which were not listed as 'prescribed' in the 1989 Regulations. In general, these were part-time, sub-degree courses and all courses leading solely to a professional qualification (including those at postgraduate level, unless they were for teaching). After the ERA most of the 'prescribed' HE qualifications offered by polytechnics and colleges were funded by the PCFC, as intended, but some courses, such as the Higher National Diploma (HND), continued to be funded by LEAs (as was all NPHE in the FE sector). Over the last decade new legislation has been introduced with the intention of strengthening the HE and FE sectors, in the course of which some of the anomalies of classification and funding have been clarified and dealt with, while new patterns of inter-relationship have been introduced. Nevertheless, NPHE has remained higher education in further education funded by 'further education'.

2.2 The Further and Higher Education Act 1992

The Further and Higher Education Act 1992[3] abolished the binary line between universities and polytechnics, extended degree-awarding powers to the former polytechnics, and created one funding council for higher education – the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). It also established FE colleges as independent corporations to be funded by a new parallel body, the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC), which inherited its funding, including for NPHE and HNDs in the FE sector, from the LEAs. Post 1992 the FEFC's policy was to encourage expansion of FE numbers, with the exception of NPHE, which was simply to be maintained in volume. (At that time HEFCE's policy was one of 'consolidation' in the new unitary HE sector.) Following a number of studies of the interface between further education and higher education in the mid 1990s, including *Higher education in further education colleges: funding the relationship 1995*[4] (which, in the explanatory note to Annex D defines NPHE), and the publication of the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education's report *Higher education in the learning society ('The Dearing Report') 1997*,[5] which advocated growth at 'sub-degree level', 'prescribed' courses of higher education were redefined by the **Education Prescribed Courses of Higher Education Regulations 1998.**[6] As a consequence of this, funding responsibility for all HNDs and HNCs and any residual first degree and postgraduate-level work (except that solely for a professional examination at a higher level) previously funded by the FEFC was transferred from the FEFC to HEFCE for the 1999/2000 academic year. (HEFCE therefore either directly funded HE provision in further education, if that is where it was taught, or indirectly funded it, if the FE college received a fee from the university on a franchise basis.) This left further education with its wide range of NPHE vocational and professional courses, still funded by the FEFC.

2.3 The Learning and Skills Act 2000

In order to bridge the academic/vocational divide between schools and further education and to strengthen structures for responding to the national skills agenda, **The Learning and Skills Act 2000**[7] established another new funding body – the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) – to replace the FEFC and the former Training and Enterprise Councils (TECs). Among other things, LSC was specifically given power to fund NPHE ('courses in preparation for professional examinations at a higher level or providing education at a higher level'). In **Guidance on FE Funding Eligibility and Rates 2001/2002**[8] the LSC removed the restriction on growth in NPHE and gave local LSCs the responsibility for agreeing changes in its volume with colleges according to market needs. The funding guidance also noted that the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) was reviewing and accrediting qualifications in this area of provision (among others) in relation to the new National Qualifications Framework. This is still the current position. (See section 3.) Future funding awaits the outcome of the work of QCA and of discussions between the LSC and HEFCE, which are taking place in the context of the government's target of 50%

participation in higher education by the 19–30 age group by 2010. In the meantime various patterns of funding higher education in further education will continue through consortium and franchising arrangements.

2.4 Research on higher education in FE

These brief references to the classification and funding consequences of the above three acts of parliament give some of the background to NPHE. For a more comprehensive appreciation this paper should be read alongside the report *Closer by degrees: the past, present and future of higher education in further education colleges*,[9] recently published by the Learning and Skills Development Agency. *Closer by degrees* is a detailed historical and contextual account of the development of higher education in further education which through critical analysis raises important issues to be tackled to inform future HE policy. With reference specifically to NPHE the report traces its history to date and places it, in its final chapter 'Higher education in the learning and skills sector', in policy terms under 'A new vocational ladder':

> *Around the foundation degree and spanning the middle and upper rungs of the vocational ladder, there remain a variety of professional and technical qualifications whose future status and funding responsibility will be decided over the next 2 to 3 years.*
>
> Parry and Thompson 2002

This 'variety of professional and technical qualifications' is NPHE.

3 HE IN FE COLLEGES: NATIONAL POLICY

3.1 Widening participation

The reference to a 'ladder' shows the important role further education has, as a provider of qualification 'steps', in working with higher education to widen participation in higher education. Two influential reports published in 1997, the 'Dearing Report' on higher education and the 'Kennedy Report' on further education (*Learning works: widening participation in further education*[10]) paved the way for widening participation in further education and higher education. The Dearing Report advocated an increase in 'sub-degree' work, particularly in further education, and this eventually led to the development of foundation degrees. It also recommended that 'wherever possible' HE provision in FE colleges should be funded directly (Recommendation 67). There was already evidence of collaboration between further education and higher education over Access courses, Year 0 degrees in further education (Year 0 of a 4-year degree, where the first – and sometimes subsequent – year was franchised to further education) and other franchising arrangements. Further education had a good track record of widening participation in higher education and post-Kennedy this was given a funding impetus to encourage growth in participation by non-traditional applicants, using their postcode as a proxy. This approach was later transferred to higher education. However, although HE funding was earmarked for widening participation in universities once the students were enrolled, the impact of earlier policy changes to the ways financial support reached the students themselves had dampened growth in participation. Progression of students from further education to higher education was therefore seen as an even more important success factor and HEFCE and the LSC jointly promoted **Partnerships for Progression 2001**[11] as a mechanism for coordinating further education and higher education.

3.2 The vocational route

One of the ways in which further education was expected to contribute to participation in higher education was by encouraging the development of vocational higher education. This was in confirmation of the traditional role of colleges in the sector, where they were already offering qualifications for Modern Apprenticeships and for older people who wished to gain qualifications in order to play their part as members of a skilled workforce. Increasingly, although not yet on a very large scale, colleges had added a flexible, information technology (IT)-based mode of study for their qualifications, either on a distance or

drop-in basis. Many were learning hubs for the Learndirect (Ufi) initiative. Most colleges were running cost-recovery training courses as well as their LSC-funded work. Since 2001, a number of colleges have been designated Centres of Vocational Excellence (COVEs) for particular specialisms. They have a role to play in consortium arrangements to form HE-led New Technology Institutes. Several colleges are now offering vocational foundation degrees, validated by their partner HEIs, and these are increasing in number following the initial prototypes. As yet there is little evidence of NPHE providing a direct progression route to 'prescribed' higher education, although some foundation degrees offer exemptions for holders of some NPHE qualifications. For example, Huddersfield University's foundation degree in business, finance and law, offers exemption from certain accountancy modules for applicants who have completed their Association of Accounting Technician (AAT) qualifications. However, a more flexible approach to the definition of higher education could re-define NPHE as 'prescribed higher education' in its own right with its own place in the university course offer. The Parliamentary Select Committee on Education and Skills considered redefining professional qualifications in December 2001. Giving evidence on the definition of higher education in relation to the achievement of the national targets for participation in higher education, the Minister for Lifelong Learning and Higher Education, Margaret Hodge, said:

> *We are looking at a number of qualifications that it seems one can complete in less than a year, but they are of a nature that warrants them being higher education qualifications ... they are professional qualifications. We shall ask QCA to look at those to validate them to ensure that they are of an appropriate quality to justify an HE label. Those are the only ones that we may bring into the definition.*
>
> Parliamentary Select Committee on Education and Skills 2001[12]

3.3 Higher level qualifications and national frameworks for qualifications

3.3.1 The national frameworks

A 'ladder' implies that there is a framework to support the steps. Through the 1990s work had taken place formally and informally to develop a single, coherent, national framework for qualifications, with the outcome that there are now two related but insufficiently articulated frameworks. One, the framework for HE qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, overseen by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) for higher education, has five HE levels, two of which – H1 Certificate and H2 Intermediate are below honours degree level. The other, the National Qualifications Framework, also has five levels, which show the equivalence of national vocational and secondary school level academic and pre-vocational qualifications. Two of the levels, Levels 4 and 5, which are HE levels, overlap with the QAA framework, but exactly where Level 4 ends and Level 5 begins in relation to QAA's levels is not clear. Work undertaken by QAA leading to the publication of its level descriptors for higher education identified the difficulty of establishing equivalence between qualifications classified by the very different systems for further education and higher education (including their systems for data collection). (See 4.4 and 6.3.)

3.3.2 QCA and higher level vocational qualifications

The QCA was formed in 1997 by the merger of the former National Council for Vocational Qualifications (NCVQ) and the Schools Curriculum Assessment Authority (SCAA). It is the regulatory body for qualifications awarded by bodies in England outside the university sector. Following over a decade of work by NCVQ to rationalise and create coherence among vocational qualifications, QCA is currently charged with the exercise of accrediting awarding organisations' submissions of higher level vocational qualifications (HLVQs) to the NQF; ie the non-QAA framework. Higher level vocational qualifications are defined as those positioned at or above Level 4 or the HE equivalent. NVQs at Levels 4 and 5 are deemed to have met comparable criteria already by meeting national occupational standards for skills and national standards for awards and are not included in this process. Each awarding organisation (any organisation, such as an awarding body, professional body, educational institution or employing organisation, which awards qualifications in its own right) has first to meet QCA's criteria for being an awarding body itself (Part A). Once successful, it must then show how its submissions meet the national

design principles for higher level vocational qualifications (Part B). QCA is expected to complete this work in readiness for the 2003/04 academic year. It is intended that the accreditation process will clarify and rationalise higher level vocational qualifications. For example, 'Qualification and unit titles must be concise, distinctive and appropriate, clearly indicative of coverage, and (for qualification titles) consistent with the proposed location in the national framework' (QCA 2001).[13]

However, QCA is prioritising achieving coherence of qualifications offered by each awarding body and then each skills sector at this stage, and the more difficult task of seeking consistency across awarding bodies may have to wait for a later stage. For example, awarding bodies are being referred to QAA's guidelines on qualification nomenclature (*The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*) to clarify the use of certain titles but this begs the question of levels and equivalence. As the *Notes* to the design principles themselves state:

> *In the absence of an agreed system of higher education levels across England, Wales and Northern Ireland, awarding institutions will need to state what system of levels they are using. Broadly compatible models are used by the credit consortia; alternatively, where qualifications are not directly linked to higher education, awarding organisations may use NVQ levels 4 and 5. If and when an agreed national system is adopted, awarding organisations will be expected to use that.*[14]
>
> QCA 2001

QCA is aware of the issues and has a Joint Forum for Higher Levels, which includes representatives of QAA, higher education, further education and the other British regulatory bodies, to oversee progress and to commission special studies, for example on titling.

3.3.3 Work in progress

QCA's work is currently in progress and any report at this stage has to be a snapshot. The last report received from QCA for Part A was for April 2002. By then 103 awarding bodies (including some professional bodies) had successfully met Part A requirements, although not all would be submitting Levels 4 and 5 qualifications, and 20 more were under consideration. A further 15 were expected to resubmit after December 2002 or to enter into partnership arrangements with organisations that had already met Part A requirements. Partnership arrangements had already been set up by 71 awarding bodies with some of the 103 awarding bodies, especially City and Guilds (48 partners) and Edexcel (12). Further submissions are expected. One of the criteria which has caused concern for some professional bodies has been the requirement that: 'Award of a qualification in the framework should not depend on the successful candidate taking up or maintaining membership of a given organisation, or registration with a professional or trade body, other than where required by statute' (QCA 2001).[15]

This is an issue where the qualification itself is 'membership', 'licentiate' or 'fellowship' and professional bodies are discussing with QCA how they can make arrangements to ensure that this criterion can be met. For example, the Association of British Dispensing Opticians (ABDO) is a professional body whose qualifying award to dispensing opticians is fellowship of its own association. Progress with part B has been slow so far, partly because part A has to be completed before submissions can be made under part B. By June 2002 about 140 qualifications had been submitted from 29 awarding bodies, of which 10 qualifications had been accredited. (Not all qualifications will remain at their previous level. For example, the City and Guilds 730 FE Teachers Certificate, previously considered a Level 3 qualification, is now accredited at Level 4.) A further 290 were expected by April 2003. No policy decision has yet been made about whether or not qualifications which fail to meet the criteria for inclusion in the framework or which may not have been submitted will continue to be funded by the national funding bodies. A detailed examination of the NPHE data shows the volume and complexity of the area of work.

4 NPHE: THE DATA

4.1 Statistics for 3 years

4.1.1 The data source

The source of the data used for this research is the Learning and Skills Council's aggregated Individualised Student Record for LSC/FEFC-funded NPHE in England for the years 1998/99, 1999/2000 and 2000/01. Three LSC reports have been used: one showing each discrete qualification aim by both enrolment and student – by age in four bands: 16–18, 19–29, 30+ and Unknown; one showing each LSC-funded institution, again by both enrolment and student – by qualification type; and a third showing enrolments only by qualification, awarding body and programme area. These reports contained some data which more properly should have been classified as HEFCE's. In the 1998/99 data, before the transfer to HEFCE for the following academic year, there were over 450 qualifications at HNC/HND or degree level, which were funded by FEFC. In the subsequent 2 years a number of 'rogue' qualifications still featured in the FEFC/LSC statistics and so they, and the work transferred to HEFCE funding, have been carefully screened out by the LSDA consultant for the purpose of this research, to ensure that the analysis has used comparable data year on year. (This was not the case in the LSC's own 2000/2001 first statistical release[16] which, by including HNDs and HNC in its 7-year trends figures without an explanatory note about their transfer to HEFCE for 1999/2000, gave a very misleading impression. Table 5 in the LSC document shows a 60% drop in participation at Level 4/5/HE other than NVQ between 1994/95 and 2000/01.) It should be noted that there are some issues over the data match resulting in some problems with the data analysis. With these caveats in mind some analysis was carried out, the results of which are presented below.

4.1.2 Enrolments and students

Table 1 Enrolments to FEFC/LSC-funded courses 1998/99, 1999/2000 and 2000/01*

ENROLMENTS by age					
Year	16–18	19–29	30+	Unknown	Total
1998/99**	2618	29,500	46,858	552	79,528
1999/2000	2146	27,205	41,935	682	71,968
2000/01	2346	23,961	38,003	298	64,608
% 3 year reduction	10.4	18.8	18.9	46.0	18.8

STUDENTS by age					
Year	16–18	19–29	30+	Unknown	Total
1998/99**	2272	26,715	43,107	500	72,594
1999/2000	2009	25,254	39,229	667	67,159
2000/01	2186	22,231	35,434	281	60,132
% 3 year reduction	3.8	16.8	17.8	43.8	17.2

*Tables prepared from data derived from LSC ISR report March 2002.

** Note 1998/99 and subsequent years exclude provision transferred to HEFCE funding for 1999/2000.

The difference in numbers between enrolments and students is quite small: in 1998/99 it was approximately 7000, in 1999/2000 4500 and 2000/01 about 3500. This suggests that some students are adding one or more additional course or module to their main course of study but that this is the exception rather than the rule. Over the 3 years surveyed there was a decline in enrolments of 19% and

in students by 17%, with the decline more marked in the 19+ age group. This may be explained by the FEFC's cap on growth in NPHE until the LSC's change of funding policy, changes in the pattern of recruitment to the professions, and also a partial demographic downturn during the period surveyed (6% reduction in the 20–29-year-old age group, though an 8% rise in 16–18 year olds).

What is significant is that for each of the 3 years of the research there were over 60,000 students studying for LSC-funded NPHE qualifications in the FE sector, most of them studying for a single qualification. In 2000/2001 they were distributed across 330 colleges and external organisations.

4.2 Age

The age bands were selected with national targets in mind: 16–18 being the standard age band for preparation for entry into higher education, 19–29 being the age group targeted for participation in higher education by 2010 and 30+ being outside the targets but relevant to workforce development and lifelong learning. This was to look at trends only, since students over 18 but under 30 by 2010 would be 20 at the oldest in 2000/01. Population projections by the Government Actuary, based on the Office for National Statistics 1996 population statistics, show increases in the national population between 2002 and 2010 of 9% for 18–20 year olds, 11% for 21–24 year olds and 1% for 25–29 year olds.

The data shows that 59% of the students studying at NPHE level in 2000/01 were over 30, with just 4% in the 16–18 bracket.

The 16–18 year olds were distributed across 155 qualifications, but with concentrations (over 100 enrolments for a single qualification) in: data protection, pet store management, business administration and accounting. Apart from the certificate in data protection, where 16–18 year olds were the majority of the enrolments, there were no qualifications that seemed to be aimed solely at the 16–18 market. Given the overall ratio of 30+ to 19–29 year olds of approximately 3:2, there are few qualifications that challenge that relationship. Those where the balance is tilted in the direction of 19–29 year olds include: marketing, purchasing and supply, personnel management, dispensing optics, electrical installation, english as a foreign language, journalism, construction, accounting, and some foreign language units. The take-up of courses generally is examined in detail under section 4.3 'Programme area'.

4.3 Programme area

The data used for this analysis are taken from the LSC Further Education Individualised Student Record for 2000/01 (see Table 2) and the analysis is by the FEFC's programme area and sub-programme area classification used at that time.

- It is immediately apparent that about 60% (nearly 38,000) of the students in 2000/01 were studying for qualifications in the business area, with the largest concentrations in finance and accounting and management, each of which sub-programme area is greater (around 14,000 each) than any other single programme area.

- In finance/accounting, 58% of the qualifications are NVQs, dominated (over 6000 enrolments) by those validated by the Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT). The remaining 42% are professional qualifications awarded chiefly by the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) and the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA). In management 45% are NVQs and 55% are other management qualifications, a mixture of certificates and diplomas, dominated by the Institute of Management and the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

- Other sizeable sub-groupings of business qualifications, at around 3000 enrolments each, are: professional studies (including a large number of candidates for the Chartered Institute of Marketing's Advanced Certificate, administration (a range of certificates, diplomas and NVQs) and

retail/distribution (chiefly the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (CIPS) Graduate Diploma).

- The next comparable sub-groupings of qualifications are: education and training (over 3000) including a wide variety of certificates, diplomas and NVQs for teachers and trainers, the largest (almost 30% of the total) being the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES) Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults; and Care and Community (just under 3000) which has a similar range of qualifications to education and training and includes the substantial Diploma in Social Work, which is also funded in universities by HEFCE (see 6.1).

- Qualifications in construction, manufacturing, counselling, early years/nursery and foreign languages each have over 1000 enrolments and there is a large (over 5000) catch-all grouping of humanities which includes over 2500 enrolments on the UCLES Certificate for Proficiency in English (a high-level English as a foreign language qualification) and over 1000 on Part 2 of the Membership qualification for the Institute of Legal Executives (ILEX).

- Other smaller, niche qualifications include about 850 students studying for the Association of British Dispensing Opticians (ABDO) qualifications, over 700 students studying journalism and over 600 students, coded under engineering, studying for qualifications in quality assurance, validated by the Institute of Quality Assurance (IQUALITY).

In all, the 2000/01 statistics showed enrolments to 600 separately identified qualifications.

Table 2 NPHE 2000/01: volume of enrolments by programme area (from LSC FE ISR 2000/01)

Programme	Sub-programme	Enrols	Subtotals
Maths/Science/ Computing	Mathematics	35	
	Computing	334	
	Other sciences	865	
	Subtotal		**1234**
Agriculture	Agriculture, Horticulture, Floristry	747	
	Subtotal		**747**
Construction	Environment	122	
	Construction	1434	
	Subtotal		**1556**
Engineering	Manufacturing	1083	
	Mechanical	205	
	Electrical/Electronic	176	
	Marine	81	
	Other engineering	946	
	Subtotal		**2491**
Business	Administration	3021	
	Business Studies	245	
	Finance and Accounting	14,320	
	Management	13,515	
	Professional Studies	3456	
	Retail/Distribution	2810	
	Secretarial	409	
	Other business	142	
	Subtotal		**37918**
Hotel and Catering	Hospitality/Catering	173	
	Leisure/Tourism/Recreation	215	
	Subtotal		**388**
Health and Care	Care and Community	2798	
	Nursing/Health	444	
	Counselling	1005	
	Early years/Nursery	1504	
	Other health	469	
	Subtotal		**6220**
Art and Design	Crafts	61	
	Media and Printing	781	
	Performing Arts	216	
	3D Art /other	65	
	Subtotal		**1123**
Humanities	English/Communications	783	
	Foreign Languages	1604	
	Education/Training	3664	
	Other humanities	5022	
	Subtotal		**11,073**
Basic Education	ESOL	1	**1**
	Total		**62,751**

4.4 Qualification type

In describing the above qualifications the phrase 'a wide variety of certificates, diplomas and NVQs' has sometimes been used. In fact, the 600 qualifications were classified under 64 different 'qualification types'. The typology is not very rational and seems to have evolved over time. For example, while all NVQs have one classification (except NVQ/GNVQ language units), almost every discrete qualification awarded by the City and Guilds of London Institute (C&G) has a separate qualification type code, although it has been counted as one only in the above list of 64. There is no consistency among awarding bodies in the application of the terms certificate, diploma or award. Diplomas are described as: intermediate, national, higher, associate, licentiate, graduate, professional, specialist, certified and a separate 'qualification type' assigned to each. There is no particular association between the use of 'diploma' or 'certificate' and the time taken to achieve the qualification. The titling of qualifications often reflects the meaning and currency attributed to them by professional bodies in their own professional context. The take-up of NVQs represents 30% of the total. Most qualifications are studied part-time.

4.5 Institutions

Almost every college offers some NPHE as part of its total portfolio. Nine colleges each had more than 800 enrolments in 2000/01 and a further 16 had more than 500. See Table 3) This means, of course, that the majority of the 440 institutions doing NPHE had fewer than 500 enrolments that year. Eight colleges offering substantial amounts of NPHE, representing a geographical spread, were invited to participate in a structured telephone survey and all agreed.

Table 3 Colleges with significant NPHE

College Colleges* = participated in the telephone survey		
	500 +	800+
Blackburn	x	
Bracknell and Wokingham	x	
Bournemouth and Poole		x
Bradford and Ilkley*		x
Carlisle	x	
Cornwall*		x
Croydon	x	
City and Islington*		x
Darlington*	x	
Doncaster		x
Dudley	x	
Farnborough	x	
Highbury*	x	
Manchester College of Arts and Technology (Mancat)*		x
Plymouth	x	
Salisbury*		x
Sandwell*		x
Sheffield	x	
Solihull	x	
Stockport		x
St Helens	x	
Stoke-on-Trent	x	
West Herts	x	
Wiltshire	x	
Worcester	x	

The survey was based on their 2000/2001 data and the questions focused on the place of NPHE in their portfolio of courses, its contribution to their vocational and HE strategies, and present and future trends. Colleges were sent the questions in advance (see Appendix 1).

5 THE COLLEGES SURVEY

5.1 Specialisms

All the colleges surveyed reflected the national picture by having a very high number of enrolments in the business programme area. All offered management qualifications (NVQs and others), and some Training and Development Lead Body (TDLB) units. Marketing, accountancy, law (legal executives), business administration and quality management/assurance were also well represented. In other programme areas Bradford and Ilkley and City and Islington offered dispensing optics; Cornwall, Darlington and Highbury journalism; Mancat and Salisbury engineering; Cornwall horse knowledge and care, Mancat and Darlington European languages. In general, the NPHE specialisms were also the college specialisms at other levels. Most of the enrolments were part-time (including distance learning), except for the 2-year, full-time course in dispensing optics and the 1-year pre-entry certificate in journalism, and the age profile mirrored the national picture.

5.2 Recruitment, retention, achievement

The colleges reported that recruitment, retention and achievement to NPHE were generally good but some concerns were raised about inconsistent demand or attendance because of employment patterns. Colleges wished to be responsive to employer needs but they were constrained by their funding and found running small groups and doing some NVQ assessments expensive. A more generous funding formula would help with peaks and troughs and maintain relationships with employers. It would also encourage growth in NPHE. One college flagged up that it anticipated growth in demand from the National Health Service in the future.

5.3 Vocational or HE niche

Most of the colleges regarded NPHE as part of their vocational strategy, with courses taught by staff teaching at other levels in the vocational specialisms. Four of the colleges were Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) for particular specialisms. Some qualifications, for example those in accountancy awarded by AAT, were part of a progression ladder from Level 3 and below. Management qualifications tended to be free-standing and had developed in response to demand from employers with whom the college already had a relationship. Colleges themselves were keen to know the outcome of QCA's work on qualifications and the consequence for their funding but they had not picked up any particular concerns from employers or professional bodies, except for the Association for British Dispensing Opticians (ABDO) (see 3.3.3 above). Some colleges saw the connection between NPHE and their HE strategies, especially if they already ran HND or HNC courses and/or had a good relationship with a local university. Bradford, which had a very large HEFCE contract, saw the synergy to be achieved by cross-teaching between NPHE and HND/C courses. Only the colleges that had already applied for HEFCE development funding for higher education in FE colleges had an HE strategy document but this did not usually mention NPHE (possibly because the response was on a HEFCE-devised template). However the vocational relevance of higher education in further education was stressed in those strategies, for example: 'The greatest strength of much of the provision is its vocational relevance and its strong links to local employers'.

The orientation of further education to higher education is still quite fluid. Several colleges mentioned foundation degrees which would be starting in September 2002. One college, Cornwall, is embarking on a major, European-funded, HE development programme for the county, in conjunction with the universities of Exeter and Plymouth and Falmouth College of Arts.

5.4 Catchment

In terms of catchment most of the NPHE in the surveyed colleges was local or sub-regional. National provision was made in dispensing optics by Bradford and Ilkley, and City and Islington, and in qualifications for the armed forces by Darlington, Highbury and Salisbury. In fact, Salisbury had an unusual balance between NVQs and other NPHE, where NVQs were much more numerous, because of its work with the Army, which started from a local contact and developed into national provision.

5.5 Funding

Most of the colleges thought there were funding swings and roundabouts, although they thought that current LSC funding of NPHE was only barely adequate. Small groups could be offset by large ones, work could be offered in modules or students infilled. Most of the work was not capital intensive. However, in some areas it was difficult to attract staff because college salaries were much lower than those in industry. Many colleges flexed their fee income to cover costs. Those colleges that were familiar with HEFCE funding found it generally more generous than LSC funding but inflexible in relation to the needs of individual students who might wish to attend part of a course only.

5.6 Significance and value

In spite of these difficulties all the colleges considered NPHE a valuable part of their work in which they took some pride. They saw it as very important for workforce development and wanted to be able to make a flexible response. Some colleges believed that it was not given a high enough profile by the government, which seemed to be prioritising 16–18 year olds and basic skills at the expense of the higher level skills agenda. One of the problems for colleges was that as an identifiable area of work NPHE was somewhat 'invisible'. It was part of the vocational portfolio but it did not usually feature in FE inspections. It was higher education but not considered as such by the outside world. It did not count towards national targets for participation in higher education. Although LSC was known to have the power to fund NPHE, colleges believed that NPHE would always be seen as peripheral, if funded by LSC, because LSC was seen as primarily responsible for work to Level 3. There was a need for a policy change at national level.

6 ISSUES

6.1 Data screening

The data used was extracted from reports covering a larger set of LSC-funded qualifications, which included many 'rogue' qualifications, which should have been HEFCE-funded from 1999/2000. The funding of these 'rogues' was presumably transferred at the end of each academic year even if the data were mis-allocated by the Individualised Student Record (ISR). In 2000/01, according to the data for LSC-funded qualifications, there were still over 1400 prescribed HE enrolments included in the NPHE statistics as LSC-funded courses, which have been screened out for the purpose of this study. These were enrolments shown to 120 HNDs and HNCs and 40 degree courses. These 'rogues' did not include courses where there appears to be some doubt which funding council is responsible, for example the Council for the Certification, Education and Training in Social Work (CCETSW) Diploma in Social Work (DSW), which shows 277 LSC-funded enrolments for 2000/01, although the majority of enrolments to this qualification (over 800) are funded by HEFCE. There is a question about whether or not DSW is or ought to be the equivalent of the (or any other) Diploma in Higher Education.

Further work is needed by LSC and HEFCE to eliminate 'rogue' qualifications from the ISR.

6.2 Classification

Examination of the qualification typology (see 4.4) reveals that there is no logic underpinning it and it looks unlikely that the inconsistencies of terminology, which reflect an underlying conceptual inconsistency, will be sorted out by QCA by 2003/04. There are at least two possible ways to deal with the conceptual issues. One is to map higher level qualifications against NVQ Levels 4 and 5, using published national occupational standards and NVQ criteria. The other is to map them against the HE descriptors for qualifications at H1 and H2 level and possibly beyond. Once this is done it would be possible to harmonise or integrate the different data collection systems used for further education and higher education. The QCA Joint Forum for Higher Levels has begun to address this problem.

Further work is needed by QCA, QAA, LSC and HEFCE to develop a logical system for classifying higher level qualifications.

6.3 Data collection systems

The QAA's project on qualifications at levels HE1 and HE2, which reported in 2000 and influenced the development of qualification descriptors for the framework for HE qualifications, attempted to map classifications devised by the HE Statistics Agency (HESA) against FEFC qualification types. There are few direct equivalences, except that HESA does have two categories for NVQ – Level 4 and Level 5. However, it was possible to map many FEFC-coded NPHE qualifications against the HESA categories 25 ('Professional qualification at undergraduate level, with or without academic qualification') and 32 ('Other undergraduate diplomas and certificates'), although no conclusions were reached about whether or not this mapping was an accurate assessment. Indeed, it was thought possible that some NPHE qualifications could be reclassified as postgraduate in level as well as in time. It was left to QCA to: 'establish criteria and design rules that will determine the level of all qualifications for which it is responsible, and thus define which are properly to be categorised at a higher level' (QAA 2000).

This suggests that, although it would be desirable to harmonise the two funding bodies' data collection systems, this cannot be done satisfactorily until the underlying conceptual confusion has been removed. In any case it is important that there is closer and more meaningful communication between funding council staff responsible for qualifications and those responsible for data systems.

Once a conceptual framework has been agreed for mapping NPHE qualifications against HEFCE/HESA categories, the data collection systems of HEFCE and LSC should be harmonised.

6.4 Size

One of the historical criteria for classifying qualifications has been the length of time taken to achieve the end result, with the assumption that the longer the time taken, the higher the level achieved. This is now challengeable and flies in the face of more flexible ways of learning. Nonetheless, the majority of courses in HE institutions are full-time, 3-year courses, and this is the prevailing course model which HEFCE funds. Statistics for achievement, however, are collected according to whether or not the degree or other qualification has been awarded. It is questionable, therefore, how significant the actual mode of study should be. QAA in its guidance on the implementation of the framework for HE qualifications does, however, attempt to spell out its assumptions about volumes of learning: 'The design of academic programmes has to make some assumptions about the amount of learning that is likely to be necessary to achieve the intended outcomes' (QAA 2000).

From its perspective the FE sector, used to shorter cycle courses where the FE component may be part-time and complementary to learning done on the job, does not see a necessary connection between length of course and level of achievement. Although there are several, substantial, full-time courses included in NPHE, its exclusion from the 'prescribed' list (and an unspoken assumption because of this that it is not 'proper' higher education), is almost certainly because of its very large number of part-time courses, compounded by the fact that their titles are largely incomprehensible to the academic world.

This issue was apparent from the Minutes of the Select Committee for Education and Skills referred to in 3.2 above.

The criteria for the distinction between 'prescribed' and non-prescribed' higher education should clarified and if time taken and/or size of course are the significant criteria, the distinction should be abandoned.

6.5 Funding

This study has focused on NPHE in further education, funded by LSC, and has not examined provision in higher education funded by HEFCE. However, anecdotal information suggests that HEFCE is funding similar qualifications in higher education, both professional qualifications in their own right or as components of courses. Certainly HEFCE funding for continuing education covers qualifications such as the Institute of Linguists exams, although the funding might be for a credit-rated Certificate of Continuing Education rather than for the examination taken.

Further work could be undertaken to establish which NPHE qualifications are already being funded by HEFCE in the university sector.

7 CONCLUSIONS

7.1 The brief

The research has looked in detail at which NPHE qualifications LSC is funding in the FE sector and the profile of their take-up. Overwhelmingly the qualifications are in the business area and undertaken by older students. However, this should not obscure the fact that there is take-up in small niches, which meet very precise local or sub-regional needs. Colleges view this provision as chiefly vocational in nature, arising from long-standing relationships with particular employers. Because of their breadth of mission colleges also have collaborative relationships with local HE institutions, which at present are largely seen as separate from their involvement in NPHE. National policy now views the vocational orientation of further education as significant for widening participation in higher education and for contributing to upskilling the workforce, and NPHE could play an important part in both these policy initiatives. One of the problems which has obscured the role of NPHE to date is its classification and nomenclature. If QCA is able to locate it firmly in the national framework for qualifications at sub-degree level or higher there will be over 60,000 more students visible as participants in higher education, for which the FE sector will be given credit. However, if this were to be counted as growth in participation, it would be a falsehood, and so participation in NPHE would have to be tracked back and included in the baseline.

7.2 Funding

The issue remains as to how NPHE should be funded. It is now clear that HE work is not synonymous with HEIs. HEFCE has taken over the funding of most HE qualifications regardless of institution and so it already funds some higher education in some FE colleges, either directly or indirectly. Transferring the funding of NPHE to HEFCE would rationalise NPHE by level but not by institution. It might give NPHE a higher profile and greater status for the learners but if the vocational nature of NPHE for people at work were to become secondary to its role as a progression route to degree-level higher education, this could be detrimental. If funded by HEFCE, NPHE would have to have a place in the HE portfolio of qualifications in its own right and HEFCE would need to recognise the importance of funding short-cycle qualifications flexibly. However, there could be difficulties with professional bodies if they lost their award-giving role. If the decision is to retain the status quo, with the LSC funding residual higher education in FE colleges, it would be desirable to redesignate the work so that it is not defined negatively, and then to give it a much higher profile in the context of higher level vocational qualifications delivered in the FE sector. An advantage of NPHE remaining with the LSC is the LSC's familiarity with

short-cycle courses, its responsiveness to local and sub-regional needs and its more flexible model of funding. Whatever is decided, however, it is important that both sectors work together for the benefit of the learners.

8 IMPLICATIONS FOR COLLEGES

Colleges need to review their course profiles now for 2003/04. The issues below need urgent resolution if they are to plan adequately for provision in the immediate and longer-term future.

8.1 National frameworks

The pace of work on establishing NPHE levels and equivalences should be quickened, so that NPHE can be firmly placed, with conceptual justification, within the national frameworks for qualifications by 2003/04.

8.2 Funding

The HEFCE and the LSC should work together to eliminate the anomalies and disparities of funding NPHE by 2003/04.

8.3 Strategic importance of NPHE

NPHE should be reviewed in the context of both the workforce skills agenda and the vocational route to higher education, and its importance as a contribution to strategic planning by FE Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) acknowledged.

8.4 Responsibility for NPHE

Regardless of which funding council has the responsibility for funding NPHE, it should be re-designated and recognised as higher education in its own right.

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learning and skills development agency

LSDA NON-PRESCRIBED HE (NPHE) PROJECT TELEPHONE SURVEY ON COLLEGE PROVISION

1 I understand that your college has more than 500 NPHE (Levels 4 and 5 LSC-funded) enrolments. Are they primarily full- or part-time?

Could I have a print out of these enrolments **for the year 2000/01**, by qualification aim, qualification title, guided learning hours, start date and end date, and enrolments by age 16–18, 19–29 and 30+ and totals?
(Please attach. Thank you.)

2 Is NPHE a significant part of your work either in size or status?

What are your main vocational specialisms and how does NPHE fit in?

3 Is NPHE successful in terms of recruitment, retention and achievement?

4 Do you see it primarily as part of your vocational strategy or your HE strategy?

5 Is it important for progression (from Level 3 to Level 4 or from Level 4 to HE degrees/other?)?

Are you a member of a local FHE partnership?

Do you do much HND/HNC work?

Do you offer franchised degrees?

Could I have a copy of your HE strategy? (Please attach. Thank you.)

6 Is your NPHE part of a local, regional or national vocational portfolio?

Please specify if this varies with different courses.

7 Are there any particular employers to whom this provision is important?

Please specify vocational specialism(s).

8 Is your NPHE likely to grow?

If so, why?
If not, why not?

9 Is it affected by the development of foundation degrees?

If so, how?

10 Are there any concerns in the college or voiced by professional bodies or employers about QCA accreditation for the national framework?

Please specify.

11 Is NPHE expensive to run?

Does LSC funding cover the costs?

Do you receive additional funding from any other source, eg employer, which enhances the funding from LSC? If so, what?

12 Other. Please use this box to add any other comments you have about NPHE.

Thank you for this information which will be very useful for our study.

Other organisations and individuals consulted

Anderson Associates
Adrian Anderson
National Occupational Standards, National Vocational Qualifications

Higher Education Funding Council
Graeme Rosenberg, HE/FE
Libby Aston, Research/Policy

Huddersfield University
Julie Drake, Foundation Degree in Finance and Law, Course Tutor

Learning and Skills Council
Phil Cooke, Statistics

Qualifications and Curriculum Authority
Gill Sellix, List A
Paul Weakley, List B
Mandy Hobart, Frameworks

Sheffield University
Professor Gareth Parry

Quality Assurance Agency framework for HE qualifications

1	Certificate	**C** level	Certificates of Higher Education
2	Intermediate	**I** level	Foundation degrees, ordinary (Bachelors) degrees, Diplomas of Higher Education and other higher diplomas
3	Honours	**H** level	Bachelors degrees with Honours, Graduate Certificates and Graduate Diplomas
4	Masters	**M** level	Masters degrees, Postgraduate Certificates and Postgraduate Diplomas
5	Doctoral	**D** level	Doctorates

Qualifications and Curriculum Authority National Qualifications Framework

Level of qualification	General		Vocationally related	Occupational
5	Higher-level qualifications			Level 5 NVQ
4				Level 4 NVQ
3 advanced level	A level	Free-standing mathematics units level 3	Vocational A level (Advanced GNVQ)	Level 3 NVQ
2 intermediate level	GCSE grade A*-C	Free-standing mathematics units level 2	Intermediate GNVQ	Level 2 NVQ
1 foundation level	GCSE grade D-G	Free-standing mathematics units level 1	Foundation GNVQ	Level 1 NVQ
Entry level	Certificate of (educational) achievement			

30

Notes

[1] The Education Reform Act 1988 (HMSO)

[2] The Education (Prescribed Courses of Higher Education) (England) Regulations 1989 (HMSO)

[3] The Further and Higher Education Act 1992 (HMSO)

[4] HEFCE (1995) *Higher education in further education colleges: funding the relationship*

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